

There's plenty to see & do at Ag Progress

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Penn State's support of the state's \$3 billion ag industry, is "Agriculture: Growing for You."

"A record number of exhibitors will display their goods and service," reports Joseph Harrington, Penn State agronomist and Ag Progress general manager. "Everything from large silos to small seeds."

New Penn State President Bryce Jordan will be in attendance all three days. He will address the College of Agriculture Alumni Society at the Tuesday luncheon. He also will speak at the House and Senate Ag Committees meetings on Wednesday.

The Ad Advisory Council will be special guests on Thursday. Lt. Gov. Bill Scranton will be a special guest on Tuesday.

Free bus tours of the Research Center are planned every 20 minutes between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. from the uphill end of the "midway," across from the Pasto Ag Museum.

Ask the Penn State specialist

AG PROGRESS — Do you wonder why your six-year-old apple tree still is not bearing fruit? Do you lie awake at nights trying to figure out the best way to get rid of Japanese beetles? Perhaps you have a strange fungus on your wheat and don't know what to do about it?

Dear Abby won't have the answers, but Penn State specialists will. The specialists will be on hand at Ag Progress Days.

"Ask the Specialist" is the popular program where Penn State faculty who specialize in specific areas of agriculture will be available to answer your in-

dividual questions. Specialists will be located around the outside of the College of Agriculture tent and will be ready to give you answers and help you solve your problems in several areas, including horticulture, flowers, fruits, vegetables, ornamental plants, home grounds, insects, turfgrass, small-scale agriculture, soil management, agriculture preservation, farm buildings and energy, plant diseases, and computers.

"Ask the Specialist was one of the most successful Ag Progress Days features last year," says Dennis C. Scanlon, assistant

professor of agricultural education who chairs the "Ask the Specialist" committee. "We will be providing information that people may not be able to find elsewhere at Ag Progress Days. This is an ideal opportunity for people to get their individual questions answered and I really hope they take advantage of it."

Not only can you get your questions answered, but you can get your plants examined. You can bring a plant or plant sample to the plant disease clinic, which is part of the specialist program. Experts will try to identify the problem, and make suggestions about what to do.

Plant clinic to be featured at Ag Progress

AG PROGRESS — "It's always nice to know what's causing the problem," says John Peplinski, the man who usually has the answers.

As manager of the Plant Disease Clinic at Penn State, Peplinski offers diagnoses to owners of nearly 2,000 ailing plants a year. In a small laboratory in the Buckhout Building on Penn State's main campus, he receives odd-looking branches, leaves, or entire plants from residents and businesses around the state.

His tools are not those of a surgeon, but his methods are. Lori DeMarco of the Star Roses Nursery in Chester County sent the clinic leaf samples with brown patches covering most of their surfaces. Peplinski holds one under a microscope and quickly focuses in on the spots.

"Phyllosticta," he explains. "It's a fairly common leaf spot-causing fungus on maple trees."

He has his tools ready — a razor-edged knife, tweezers, and a paper towel. He soaks the leaf in a 10

percent bleach solution, then he dries it. After sterilizing the knife with a flame, he cuts a small section from the leaf; part green, and part brown. He places four of these small samples in a culture plate. Fungus will grow. In a week or so, Ms. DeMarco will know why her leaves have brown spots. With Peplinski's recommendations, maybe next year the spots will be

gone. Sometimes, as with the phyllosticta, Peplinski can diagnose the problem immediately. (He often goes through the process "just to be absolutely sure.") Other times, he must isolate and culture the disease organisms.

When the damage is discovered, the plant owners are referred to

materials that help them wipe out, fight, or adjust to the problem. If no definite answer can be given, Peplinski tries to make a few suggestions to the homeowners about possibilities.

"Gardeners and homeowners know if they have a problem, they can turn to us," he says.

So do commercial growers. Almost 50 percent of the specimens

the clinic receives are from commercial farm and garden operations. This summer, he says, he has received many strawberry samples that have Red Stele, a root rotting disease.

Summer, of course, is the peak season. Peplinski opens up the clinic's refrigerator, which is full of plants, leaves and branches

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Is a computer right for you?

will take place throughout the event.

"Computer adoption is still at the early stages," says Graham Bell, Penn State farm management agent, and coordinator of the computer exhibits at Ag Progress Days. "Only the more adventurous farmers are buying them. However, if you spend time in the farm office making management decisions, a

microcomputer allows you to manipulate data and make sound financial decisions."

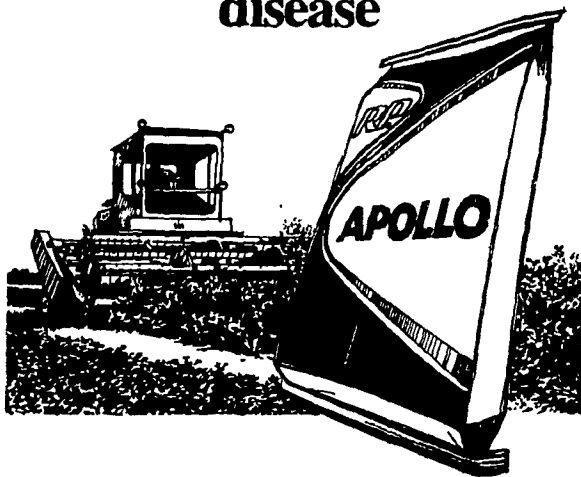
Computer information was one of the most popular exhibits at Ag Progress Days last year with more than 50 percent of the exhibit visitors expressed an interest in farm accounting programs. This year, Ron Bower, vocational agriculture teacher from Gettysburg, will be demonstrating a farm accounting program, ap-

propriately called the "Secretary of Agriculture."

"Once the information is entered in the computer, you can generate numerous reports such as balance sheets and profit and loss statements," Bell says. "The computer enables you to more quickly generate precise figures to aid in decision making. But you have to be prepared to put the time into it."

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